

# WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

*Chartered 1965*

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## FROM MAN TO MASON

Daniel D. Hrinko, P. M., Table Lodge Presentation at Nova Caesarea  
Harmony Lodge No. 2, Cincinnati, Ohio, September 25, 2024

**T**here are many different ways of presenting information in a program such as this. You can create a deck of slides for PowerPoint and dive right into the factual information. This often results in boring your audience to death and overwhelming them with data without any real understanding of the fundamental concepts.

You can present yourself as an expert full of wisdom and power and display this opinion prominently in the way you choose your words and present yourself. Such programs expect everyone to absorb what is being said and become disciples of your way of thinking.

I choose to use questions.

The world is filled with questions. It is my belief that everybody knows something worth learning. The goal of this presentation then is for me to share a bit of what I know and ask that you share a bit of what you know in the discussion to follow my brief talk. Through this process, we all will learn something from everyone else as part of the process.

My own personal Masonic journey has been grounded in the process of asking then answering questions. As a new entered apprentice, I asked many questions. However, all I got was “I don’t know. We just do this or say this.” This was a frustrating process because I had hoped to learn what was behind many of the things I heard and saw.

When asking questions, it soon becomes clear that many questions have no precise answer. Some answers are unique to that individual.

Many answers lead to more questions. This sets the stage for a never-ending cycle of questioning, exploration, learning, and again asking more questions.

Since we are all Masons, let’s start with a foundational question pertaining to Freemasonry.

What makes you a Mason?

This question can be explored and answered on many different levels, some of which we will touch on tonight. The most obvious answer is what we find in our entered apprentice catechism. This response immediately connects us with our own initiatic experience in the ritual of this degree which is an amazing experience. It is designed to be powerful, moving, and memorable. I will

never forget the music that was played when I circumambulated the room or the grizzled face of Arthur Sheets who presented me with my apron.

The next question that arises from this line of thinking is how much did you change that evening?

As we progressed through the ritual, we made promises. We were able to connect with several basic symbols. However, I was quickly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information presented to me and the cryptic nature of much of this information.

On our typical Masonic journeys, we were soon asked to demonstrate our proficiency pertaining to that degree. So this leads to the next question.

How did you prove your proficiency?

Being a younger man at the age of 21, the minimum age at that time, I was expected to memorize a list of questions and regurgitate the answers in open Lodge. The entire focus of my Masonic education was on this process and nothing else.

I was able to complete that task in 2 weeks delivering a letter-perfect recitation. This drew approbations from the southeast corner where the Past Masters gathered. I received my fellow craft degree that night.

I was able to Memorize the proficiency for the fellow craft degree in 20 minutes. I then received my Master Mason degree 2 weeks later and demonstrated my proficiency in the Master Mason degree 2 weeks after that. In each case, the Past Masters approved of my demonstration and immediately made me Senior Steward. This meant that my formal education in Freemasonry was compressed into 6 weeks. That's it.

So, like all answers to questions, this leads us to more questions.

How does this process impact your daily decisions in life?

Having learned very little about the philosophy of Freemasonry, I was left with a only very basic understanding of what Freemasonry has to teach. I figured out that I was to keep my promises. I was to keep secret things secret, and that I was expected to help a brother whenever I had the opportunity. That's about it. In general, I went about my daily life in a manner very similar to what I had been doing during much of my previous 21 years. On reflection, I can say that the process I experienced of formal Masonic education actually made very little impact on the way I lived my life.

Time for some editorializing. I believe this process is very good at making members and very bad at making Masons. I describe myself as a self-taught Mason. I don't want an self-taught heart surgeon operating on me, and I would rather not have to rely on a self-taught Mason in times of distress.

My lodge did nothing to promote my learning, understanding, or application of Freemasonry. I was forced to dive into the abyss of what constitutes Masonic Knowledge without map, guide, or any sense of direction.

I was fortunate to connect with Bro. Nelson King who introduced me to the Philalethes Society and my path was immediately redirected. Through them I was able to learn where to look, what to look for, and to pick the brains of some of the greatest masonic minds of the day.

So this leads us to the next question. How do you transform a man into a Mason?

It is my belief that to truly become transformed from a man into a Mason several steps must be accomplished. First, you must learn about what is contained in Freemasonry, the philosophy, as it is presented in the essential elements of our rituals and lectures. Second, you must understand these elements seeing how they are interconnected and create implications for decisions we make in our daily lives. And lastly, we must apply what we have learned and now understand as we make our way through life.

Memorizing a list of questions and answers and regurgitating the answers is not sufficient to accomplish all 3 elements of learning, understanding, and then being able to apply what you've learned. Completing this process is a time-consuming process that requires effort and tenacity to seek out the information available, develop an understanding of that information, and seeking opportunities for applying what you understand.

We all recognize that personal growth, guided by the framework of Freemasonry, is ultimately a personal journey. However, like all journeys, good guidance and support can assist you with staying on track and growing more efficiently.

So this leads us to the next question.

Who is responsible for making Masons?

A review of our founding documents including our charter states that it is the duty of the Lodge to make Masons. This duty is further reinforced in the opening words of the entered apprentice degree where we state that we "come to learn" and later "to improve ourselves in Freemasonry."

This tells me that the primary job of the Lodge is to make Masons. The primary job of a Lodge is not to pay the bills, maintain a building, raise money for charity, or to serve the whim and will of the grand lodge. Everything we do in Lodge should be rooted and focused entirely upon this fundamental duty, to make Masons.

Since we know that growth in Freemasonry is an individual journey and ultimately the responsibility of the brother, how do we promote and support this transformation?

I would submit that we have opportunities to teach Freemasonry beginning with the very first conversation with a man who is expressing an interest in Freemasonry. Our initial conversations

provide us with an opportunity to teach this man about the structure of Freemasonry, the process of becoming a Mason, and the expectations of a Mason.

This includes not only the simple logistical description of the steps, but it also includes the expectation of moral and character development supported by the lessons of Freemasonry. These conversations allow us an opportunity to learn about this man and his goals in life. It allows us to shape his expectations of what he may gain from following this path. It also provides us an opportunity to bear witness to the benefits of Freemasonry based upon our own personal experiences.

As this man continues on his Masonic journey, he becomes a candidate. As a candidate, he has already committed himself to complying with our expectations. He has also expressed a desire to learn and to seek light through our brotherhood.

According to the Ohio code, lodges set the minimum expectations regarding what constitutes an acceptable proficiency. Most adopt the traditions of the past 100 years which include learning and reciting a simple catechism of questions and answers.

Most lodges consider this as sufficient. I beg to differ.

As we already noted, a mere recitation is unlikely to accomplish the necessary steps of learning and understanding and applying the lessons of Freemasonry, the philosophy.

For a Lodge to fulfill its duty to make Masons, we should use all the tools at hand including teaching the catechism **and** making use of the study methods and discussions in the principles proficiency **and** review the ritual with this new brother **and** review the lecture with this new brother **and** encourage additional readings of important materials accompanied by discussions of that material. Such steps offers opportunities for the candidate to learn about Freemasonry, understand many of the lessons in our teachings and be able to apply them in our daily lives.

It is unrealistic to expect a single master craftsman working in isolation to accomplish all of this. Therefore, it is the duty of the Lodge to provide an array of individuals to present this information to this brother. The lodge should employ the knowledge of several brothers who can share their knowledge with this new brother. The Lodge should make use of the time in Masonic Lodge meetings to pursue this process, and present all of the elements outlined above.

This intense and thorough form of formal education lays an important and essential foundation for the remainder of his Masonic career. It is the cornerstone of the spiritual temple, that house not made with hands upon which we all are laboring.

So, you are a Master Mason. Now what?

Any student of the human condition will recognize that personal growth is not a state to be obtained. It is a continuous journey with no end in sight.

This lesson is reinforced most prominently in the lectures of the middle chamber as we review the 7 liberal arts and sciences, the Greek trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic followed by the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

Resources available include organized programs such as Ohio's Royal Scoffield Society, Pennsylvania's Academy of Masonic Knowledge, and other guided study programs. Resources include numerous publications by classic authors such as Carl Claudy, Allen Roberts, Joseph Fort Newton, and W.L. Wilmshurst.

Contemporary authors including Michael Halleran, Brent Morris, and and Chris Hodapp have produced works along with many other authors currently in print through publishers such as Macoy Masonic publishing.

There are numerous podcasts available where brethren are discussing Freemasonry, its symbolism, meanings, and applications. There are You Tube channels including those posted by the Rubicon Masonic Society that offer the insights and wisdom of knowledgeable Masons. There are organizations such as the Masonic Society as well as the Philalethes Society with magazine publications discussing these very topics.

Most importantly, you should talk with each other. Our entered apprentice charge admonishes us to converse with well-informed brothers so that each may give and receive information. No one will ever reach the point where they will have mastered the entire body of knowledge associated with Freemasonry. However, we have all figured some things out.

Therefore, we should each share what we know with each other. Give a talk. Do a book report in Lodge on something you read. Summarize an article. Converse with brothers in informal settings. Be a master craftsman for a new brother.

Remember, you don't need a title or position to help a brother along his journey. You just need to be willing to ask questions, seek answers, and share what you learned.